



**SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AS DEPICTED IN
THE OUTSIDERS BY S.E. HINTON**

A Final Project

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English Department, Faculty of Humanities
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PRONOUNCEMENT

The writer states truthfully that this project is made and compiled by herself without taking any research from other papers in any university, in S-1, S-2, S-3, and diploma degree. The writer also states that she does not take any material from other people's work except for the list mentioned in the references.

Semarang, 21 June 2019

Gisela Winska Esmeralda

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

“So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.”

Matthew 6:34

“It's alright even if you don't have a dream. It's possible not to have one.

Just be happy.”

Min Yoongi

I dedicated this final project for

my parents and my future self.

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ABSTRACT

This research paper is an analysis of the literary work entitled *The Outsiders* written by S.E. Hinton. The writer uses Social Stratification theory by Max Weber to analyze the social class between the Greasers and the Socs. Other purposes of this writing are to understand the characters of Ponyboy and Johnny, the conflicts of the story, the settings of the story, the stereotypes of two social classes and the impact of social stratification. Furthermore, the sociological approach is used to complete this paper. Library research methodology is applied to collect the data. For the result, it can be concluded that the social stratification affects the development of Ponyboy and Johnny characters and the cause of the conflict that occurs in this novel.

Keywords: social stratification, social class, stereotype, impact.

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Class is used by the society to rank social categories in a system of stratification based on economic status in social life (Wright, 2003: 1). The social interaction associated with the social inequality or stratification is one of all the conflicts in our society that sometimes mentioned in literary work. Individuals sometimes treat other people differently regarding their possession of money, status, education, religion and even race. Such situations create stereotypes to evaluate individuals and discriminate against someone with others. The term class is not only stereotyping certain groups but also classifies their social roles clearly.

The writer uses a novel entitled *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton to explain how work of literature can reflect the society through its story. As she is known as young-adult novels' author, this novel shows the existence of teenager class differences between "The Greasers" and "The Socs". Moreover, it consists of social stratification, stereotypes and social roles that tend to cause conflict of status between Ponyboy which is one of the major characters in the novel and others.

The writer would like to discuss the social stratification in the novel and the impact of the social stratification. Stereotypes of the Greasers and the Socs as a result of social stratification will also be analyzed. The stereotyping is based on

class. However, it happens to the stereotype of character and role of the Socs as the member of upper class and the Greasers as the member of lower class. Moreover, the writer will discuss the intrinsic element of the novel to support the extrinsic ones. The analysis of intrinsic element will focus on the characters, conflict and setting in the novel.

1.2. Research Question

1. How is social stratification depicted in *The Outsiders*?
2. How is the stereotype depicted in *The Outsiders*?
3. What are the impact of social stratification depicted in *The Outsiders*?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research are:

1. To explain the social stratification that is depicted in *The Outsiders*.
2. To explain the stereotype between social classes in *The Outsiders*.
3. To explain the impact of the social stratification that is depicted in *The Outsiders*.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Intrinsic Elements

The intrinsic elements that will be discussed in this study is character, conflict and setting.

2.1.1. Character

Kennedy and Gioia describe a character is “presumably imagined person who inhabits story” (1995: 77). Character is a very important component in a novel that the author creates to describe roles of the novel. Character can be an individual, thing or any figure portrayed in a literary work. Character of a story is classified into major and minor characters. Major character, an important figure, is the center of the action within the story or theme. DiYanni (2001: 55) additionally stated that supporting the major is one of the functions of minor characters.

2.1.2. Conflict

According to Perrine, conflict is a clash of actions, ideas, desires, or wills (1998: 42). Conflict of a story can be divided into internal conflict and external conflict. Internal conflict is a conflict that occurs in the character’s mind. A character of the story must deal with their own mixed emotions, feelings and desires. The struggle between two or more characters or his environment is an external conflict. Conflict is an important element in developing the plot of the story.

2.1.3. Setting

Setting is an important part in literature which is the time and place where the action takes place in literary works. Meyer (1990: 107) stated “Setting is the context in which action of a story occurs”. Meyer classifies setting into three major elements. It generally includes place, time, and social environment that happen in the story. Setting of place can be a room, house, country or region. Setting of time shows a certain time when the story occurs. Setting of social environment is about the condition of society in the story.

2.2. Extrinsic Elements

In this section, three extrinsic elements that would be analyzed are social stratification, stereotype and the impact of social stratification.

2.2.1. Social Stratification

Max Weber, a German sociologist, views social stratification in three dimensions: class, status and party (Weber, 1978). “Class is part of a broader multidimensional schema of stratification in Weber in which the most central contrast is between ‘class’ and ‘status’” (Wright, 2003: 5). The class describes an individual’s position based on the income and the goods she/he has. The status describes the prestige and honor an individual enjoys. The last, the party describes the power an individual has. Status of an individual can be found specifically in his lifestyle, formal education and prestige (Weber, 1978: 305-306).

Furthermore, in every relationship between different social groups, conflicts can potentially occur. Weber said “a social relationship may be expressed as conflict insofar as a person’s actions are intentionally oriented to carry out his will which is contrary to the other party” (Weber, 1978: 38). Based on Weber theory, conflict can exist if an individual is doing one thing against others in different social class and status. The conflict of status can occur if one or more characters within a particular status group creates a confrontation with one or more people from other status.

2.2.2. Stereotype

Stereotype is defined by Greenwald and Banaji as the beliefs socially shared regarding the character traits of social class’ members. “Stereotypes guide judgment and action to the extent that a person acts toward another as if the opposite possesses traits included within the stereotype” (Greenwald and Banaji, 1995: 14). According to Andersen (2008: 276) stereotyping can be classified by several categories like race, ethnic, gender and class. People tend to be judged by their visual appearance and attitude. Stereotypes also provide knowledge about the quality of individual or group characters in their social roles in society. Most stereotypes often convey a negative impression as a result of people assume things about others that may not be true.

2.2.3. The Impact of Social Stratification

Social Stratification has a significantly influence people who experience it and the society. Because social stratification is the primary reason for economic and social inequality, this results in differences in life opportunities. In countries

with bigger income inequality, Wilkinson and Pickett confirmed that health and social problems are more common (2009: 20). The higher status with better jobs, higher incomes, better education, and living in wealthier areas make them healthier and lives longer. Meanwhile, it creates emotional stress and depression for the people in lower status as they have unequal possession of wealth, power and prestige. They have to deal with poverty, violence (such as homicides and assaults), family dysfunction and fear.

RESEARCH METHOD

The author uses the library research method to collect data in analyzing the novel *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton. Library research involves identifying and finding sources that provide factual information or personal opinion about research question and necessary component of every other research method at some point (George, 2008: 6). The writer uses several books, journals, newspapers and other printed media. This study is also supported by several references related to the discussions from the internet such as e-books and web sources.

In addition, a contextual method by using sociological approach is applied to explain how social stratification is represented in the novel. Sociological approach helps the writer to analyze the novel through characters. According to X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia, “when using the sociological approach, a critic examines the economic context of literature in which it is writing or receiving.” (Kennedy and Gioia, 1995: 2194). One of the aspects of society that can be studied is the relations between opposing group, for example the rich and the poor.

DISCUSSION

4.1. Intrinsic Elements

The analysis of intrinsic elements will discuss about characters, conflict and setting in *The Outsiders*.

4.1.1. Character

In this study, two major characters that will be analyzed are Ponyboy Curtis and Johnny Cade.

4.1.1.1. Ponyboy Curtis

Ponyboy Curtis is one of the two major characters and a narrator in *The Outsiders*. He is a member of the Greasers. He is fourteen years old and a smart kid, "... cause I'm supposed to be smart; I make good grades and have a high IQ and everything" (Hinton 1967: 4). Ponyboy has a decent physique but considered small for his age. His light brown, almost-red hair is "... squared off in back and long at the front and sides" (Hinton 1967: 3). He likes to wear blue jeans, t-shirt, leather jackets and sneakers.

He has two older brothers, Darry and Sodapop. However, he feels different from Darry who is tough and hard working to end their family's struggle. Nor is he like Sodapop who gave up on his education. He is straight-A student and an excellent writer. His sensitivity and intelligence help him understand his world and connect with those around him. It also distinguish him from other gang members.

I mean, my secondoldest brother, Soda, who is sixteen-going-on-seventeen, never cracks a book at all, and my oldest brother, Darrel, who we call Darry, works too long and hard to be interested in a story or drawing a picture, so I'm not like them (Hinton, 1967: 3).

4.1.1.2. Johnny Cade

Johnny Cade, a friend of Ponyboy, is a sixteen year old boy and also a member of the Greasers. “He had big black eyes in a dark tanned face; his hair was jet-black and heavily greased and combed to the side, but it was so long that it fell in shaggy bangs across his forehead” (Hinton 1967: 11). He comes from a physically and verbally abusive home with parents who are fighting all the time and ignoring him, “His father was always beating him up, and his mother ignored him” (Hinton 1967: 11). Johnny can stay away from home for long periods of time and nobody seems to care or notice, contrast to Ponyboy’s situation. He often sleeps in the vacant lot because it feels safer than going home. Johnny has been jumped and severely beaten by the Socs that he became jumpy and fearful, “But I had seen Johnny after four Socs got hold of him, and it wasn't pretty. Johnny was scared of his own shadow after that. Johnny was sixteen then” (Hinton, 1967: 5). Johnny is sensitive, desperate and hopeless that he is even contemplating suicide (Hinton 1967: 42).

Later at the story, Johnny’s acts of bravery lead to murder and heroic rescue. His courage was seen when he saved Ponyboy from the Socs who jumped to them by stabbing Bob Sheldon, one of the Socs, at the park (Hinton 1967: 48). It leads to his greater act of bravery when he rescues the children from a church that is on fire and resulting him to the death after injuries from the rescue (Hinton 1967:

78). Ponyboy decides to write about Johnny to ensure his bravery will not be forgotten.

4.1.2. Conflict

The conflict in *The Outsiders* can be divided into two types: internal conflicts and external conflicts. The internal conflicts in this story are more experienced by Ponyboy Curtis and Johnny Cade with themselves. The first one is a conflict between Ponyboy who feels dilemma whether he is a Greaser or not. When the most of the Greasers enjoy doing bad things like stealing, holding up gas stations or even gang fight, he loves books, see movies, read and watch sunset. As Ponyboy stated “And nobody in our gang digs movies and books the way I do” (Hinton, 1967: 3). Johnny Cade also has to deal with internal conflict in the novel. “If it hadn't been for the gang, Johnny would never have known what love and affection are” (Hinton 1967: 11). It implies that the Greasers are his only reliable family and he needs the Greasers to give him a sense of purpose. Although he never got love apart from the Greasers, he wants to live in a city without being separated into the Greasers and the Socs. They naturally become a Greaser because they live in the east. "I guess we're different" (Hinton 1967: 68) said by Johnny when he realizes that he and Ponyboy have different lifestyles with their own group.

Moreover, the external conflict happens between Ponyboy and Johnny as the Greasers with the Socs. Based on the economic status in the novel, it tells that the Socs are rich kids who like to beat the Greasers, while the Greasers feel they are powerless because they are poor. Esteemed by their superiority and richness in

class, the Socs like to beat up the Greasers for their own sake. “Not like the Socs, who jump greasers ...” (Hinton, 1967: 4). in chapter 1, some kids of the Socs attacked Ponyboy “They had me down in a second. They had my arms and legs pinned down and one of them was sitting on my chest with his knees on my elbows, and if you don't think that hurts, you're crazy” (Hinton, 1967: 5-6).

4.1.3. Setting

4.1.3.1. Setting of Place

There is no indication from the novel where the exact city of Ponyboy and Johnny live. This is an unnamed city. “THE PARK WAS ABOUT two blocks square...” (Hinton 1967: 47). One place in the city where the conflict arises is the park. “Nobody was around at two-thirty in the morning, and it was a good place to relax and cool off” (Hinton 1967: 47). Because of the park is quite at night time, the Socs, the rich kids, have courage to come straight to harass Ponyboy and Johnny, “Five Socs were coming straight at us, and from the way they were staggering I figured they were reeling pickled” (Hinton 1967: 47). They start to attack Ponyboy and Johnny, “We backed against the fountain and the Socs surrounded us” (Hinton 1967: 48). Johnny who tries to save Ponyboy, stabs Bob from the Socs. Out of fear, Ponyboy and Johnny ask Dallas or Dally, their friend from the Greasers, to help them running away. Then, they hid in an abandoned church for days, “Dally instructed. "There's an old abandoned church on top of Jay Mountain”” (Hinton 1967: 54). Later at the story, Ponyboy and Johnny back to the city where they live.

4.1.3.2. Setting of Time

The author never specifically describe the exact setting of time in the story. However, the conflict starts to arise in chapter I when Dallas asked Ponyboy and Johnny to join him to the Nightly Double drive-in movie. "'Yeah, since it ain't a school night." Darry was real good about letting me go places on the weekends. On school nights I could hardly leave the house" (Hinton, 1967: 13). The quotation implies that this happens at night on the weekend. The next day, "... around at two-thirty in the morning" (Hinton 1967: 47), is the time when the Socs harass Ponyboy and Johnny at the park. After hiding for five days, "By the fifth day.." (Hinton 1967: 68), Dallas comes up and takes them out to eat. The church is on fire when they get back and a group of children on school trip are trapped inside. All the children is saved by Ponyboy, Johnny and Dallas. Ponyboy and Johnny rush in and save all the little kids. When Ponyboy wakes up, he is on the way to the hospital. At the hospital, he is finally reunited with his brothers. Dallas is fine, but Johnny is in critical condition and might die.

He burned one arm pretty badly, though, trying to drag the other kid out the window. Johnny, well, I don't know about him. A piece of timber caught him across the back--- he might have a broken back, and he was burned pretty severely. He passed out before he got out the window (Hinton 1967: 81).

At the next day, Johnny dies and Dallas runs off. Later, Ponyboy finds out that Dallas was killed by the police after robbing a grocery store on the same day.

4.1.3.3. Setting of Social Environment

The unnamed city of the story clearly splits into two zone. The west is where the rich people live and the poor naturally live the east side of the city. "It's

like the term "greaser," which is used to class all us boys on the East Side. We're poorer than the Socs and the middle class" (Hinton 1967: 4). The west side represents wealth and power. While the east side represents poverty and dysfunction with rundown houses and stores. The environment sets the stage for teenagers to have conflicts about social classes. The characters have to endure the pain throughout the story that comes from the stereotypes placed on them because of where they live. Ponyboy and Johnny have to live in fear for being jumped by the rich kids.

4.2. Extrinsic Elements

External conflict that are contained in *The Outsiders* happens between the Greasers and the Socs. This conflict is a status conflict between the rich and the poor in a city. Based on economic status, Ponyboy and Johnny are the representatives of the lower class or the Greasers, which means that The Socs has a higher status than them. Otherwise, their status has several deviations in some cases. Status conflict can easily occur between them in this uncommon condition.

4.2.1. Social Stratification

In line with Max Weber's theory, status can be determined by economic condition and led to class positions. This social status can easily found in the society. Social stratification can be divided based on wealth, parental inheriting or prestige, stereotypical lifestyle and education background.

Economic condition or wealth is the first difference of social stratification. In this novel, the city splits into two zones. "We get jumped by the Socs. I'm not sure how you spell it, but it's the abbreviation for the Socials, the jet set, the West-

side rich kids” (Hinton 1967: 4). In fact, it is not the complicated nature of a real city, it is a symbol to represent the economic inequality and money is the main thing that divides them. “We're poorer than the Socs and the middle class” (Hinton 1967: 4) as Ponyboy said to refer to the Greasers who are the lowest income people in the city and the Socs are middle and upper class kids.

The second difference is parental inheriting or prestige. In this factor, an individual claims that their status is inherited by his parents. Based on the class stratification in the novel, Ponyboy got his status from his parents who had lived in the East. Later, it shows that Ponyboy live in a damage house which he lived in after his parents died, “... and our house isn't real great. It's run-down looking and everything, and the inside's kind of poor-looking, too” (Hinton 1967: 139). Johnny also comes from not wealthy family who lives in East. They like to fight and ignore Johnny. The fact that the Greasers are people that come from poor and violent families, they have to work hard to get what they want. Meanwhile, the West is a side of rich people come from. Randy, the Socs, is known to have higher status than Ponyboy since Randy lives in West. “His old man was rich, he could pay whatever fine there was for being drunk and picking a fight” (Hinton 1967: 140). This proves that Randy got his status from his father who is already rich. The Socs clearly get their Mustang and Corvair’s cars from their parents since they are still a high school student.

The next difference is stereotypical lifestyle associated to upper and lower social class. “One has to work for a living and the other comes from the West Side” (Hinton 1967: 122). The quotation implies that the Greasers kids have to work to make money for living. Sometimes, they drop out from school to work.

They also like to steal things and have a gang fight. Meanwhile, The Socs are the rich kids who likes to drive their expensive cars around the city and get drunk. They also like to pick a fight with the Greasers because they think the Greasers are troublemaker. "... gave us the same kind of look that the Socs did when they came by in their Mustangs and Corvairs and yelled "Grease"" (Hinton 1967: 14).

Education background is the last difference. Both the Greasers and the Socs are going to school. However, a few of the Greasers choose to drop out from school to work. As Soda said to Ponyboy "Ponyboy, I'm telling you the truth. I dropped out because I'm dumb. I really did try in school, but you saw my grades. Look, I'm happy working in a gas station with cars" (Hinton, 1967: 150).

4.2.2. Stereotype

Ponyboy and Johnny, the member of the Greasers, are lower class kids. "Just like we wear our hair long and dress in blue jeans and T-shirts, or leave our shirttails out and wear leather jackets and tennis shoes or boots" (Hinton 1967: 4). This quotation explains how the Greaser dressed in daily life. The reason why they called the Greasers is because the amount of gell used to slick back their long hair to make it greasy and darker, "It was our trademark" (Hinton, 1967: 61) claimed Ponyboy. "Tough, loud girls who wore too much eye makeup and giggled and swore too much" (Hinton 1967: 13) said by Ponyboy when he describes the girls from the Greasers. How Ponyboy is dressed is suitable with the stereotypes of the Greasers. Ponyboy proudly said that his hair was his pride.

The Socs are well-dressed rich kids who do not have to work for whatever they want. They have short hair or described "Clean shaven with semi-Beatle haircuts, wearing striped or checkered shirts with light red or tan-colored jackets

or madras ski jackets” (Hinton 1967: 120). They drive fancy cars like Mustang or Corvairs. They like to jump the Greasers and throw beer blasts. Just because they rich, they feel superior and like to fight the Greasers with knives and other weapons. Even Johnny has scar on his cheek after attacked by the Socs. “That's why people don't ever think to blame the Socs and are always ready to jump on us. We look hoody and they look decent” (Hinton, 1967: 120). It implies that people stereotype these two gangs based on the visual appearance which is the way they dressed. The Greasers may look down upon more than the Socs due to the fact that they like to steal. However, the Socs also like to carry weapon, get drunk and looking for fight. People justify the Socs’ acts just because they are rich, dressed well and can be a future asset to society without realizing that they are also troublemaker. “Not like the Socs, who jump greasers and wreck houses and throw beer blasts for kicks, and get editorials in the paper for being a public disgrace one day and an asset to society the next” (Hinton 1967: 4).

In reality, not every Greaser is violent. Ponyboy, Johnny and Dally are recognized as good people by the teacher of a group of children on trip, Jerry, based on their heroic actions of saving the children from a church that is on fire, not their visual appearances.

“I swear, you three are the bravest kids I've seen in a long time. First you and the black haired kid climbing in that window, and then the tough-looking kid going back in to save him. Mrs. O'Briant and I think you were sent straight from heaven. Or are you just professional heroes or something?” (Hinton 1967: 81).

When Randy, the Socs, visited Ponyboy to have a heart to heart conversation, Ponyboy and his friend assume he is there to fight as it is usually done by the Socs. “Randy was supposed to be too cool to feel anything, and yet

there was pain in his eyes” (Hinton 1967: 98) when he states that he does not want to fight anymore. He believes that separation between groups is not necessary anymore.

4.2.3. The Impact of Social Stratification as Depicted in The Outsiders

The Socs who grow with money and privileges have so much time in their hands. To spare their time and money, they travel to the East side of town to harass and jump to the Greasers. It can be seen when Ponyboy says in chapter 3 “While the Socs had so much spare time and money that they jumped us and each other for kicks, had beer blasts and river-bottom parties because they didn't know what else to do” (Hinton 1967: 38). The Greasers’ fight because they need to protect and defend themselves from the Socs’ attack. The Socs and the Greasers’ fight will never come to end. However both the groups know, it is not easy to win against the Socs because the Greasers always under the Socs in economic situation, “You can't win, even if you whip us. You'll still be where you were before--- at the bottom. And we'll still be the lucky ones with all the breaks” (Hinton 1967: 98) said by Randy, one of the Socs, to Ponyboy.

The novel shows that violence happens as the result of social stratification. Johnny who has to live in fear of another the Socs’ attack, carries a knife everywhere, “And Johnny, who was the most law-abiding of us, now carried in his back pocket a six-inch switchblade. He'd use it, too, if he ever got jumped again. They had scared him that much” (Hinton 1967: 30). Using that knife, Johnny kills Bob to save his live and Ponyboy from the Socs’ attack in the park, ““Yeah.” His voice quavered slightly. “I had to. They were drowning you, Pony.

They might have killed you. And they had a blade... they were gonna beat me up...." (Hinton 1967: 49). This conflict makes them running away in fear. At the end, Johnny and Dallas also died.

Although both gangs are protective to their members, offering each other companionship and a sense of family, the hatred between these two gangs plays in their mind and controls them. This kind of conflicts does not have to arise if both groups respect the difference between the rich and the poor. They may have different on economic situation, but they are just the same. Both the Greasers and the Socs love to hang out at the local drive-in Theater. After Cherry, a girl from the Socs, said that she likes sunset just like Ponyboy, he realized that "Maybe the two different worlds we lived in weren't so different. We saw the same sunset" (Hinton 1976: 35). It means that regardless of their different lifestyles, attitudes and economic status, they are share the same sun and part of the same world. However, from this struggle, Ponyboy realizes that he can tell the story of his friends who died to the world and make a difference in the lives of others.

5

CONCLUSION

This study discusses character, conflict and setting as intrinsic elements. Ponyboy and Johnny are the major characters who build the story and who are

involved in the conflicts. In analysing the extrinsic elements, there are economic stratification of class and social roles occur in society. It can be identified that wealth, prestige, lifestyle, and education are the causes of class and status conflict in this novel. Moreover, the writer discusses the impact of Social Stratification itself. Unfortunately, social stratification has more negative impact than the positive one in the novel. Ponyboy has to deal with losing his two best friends as the result of the class conflicts between the Greasers and the Socs. From this study, it also can be concluded that if people fail to deal with the stereotypes, it may cause social conflict between classes.

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